

RIVER CREE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

THE REPORT OF THE BOARD TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS AND ALSO AT THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD – OCTOBER 2013

This report covers the period from the previous annual meeting of qualified proprietors held on the 6th June 2012 to the 30th September 2013.

PART ONE

This part of the report summarises what the Board have done in carrying out their statutory functions during the period.

The primary duties of the Board are the protection or improvement of the fisheries within their district, the increase of salmon and the stocking of the waters of the district with salmon – Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003, section 45(1). To assist it in fulfilling those duties the Board employs the services of two fisheries trusts, The Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) and The River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust (RCHHT). With the assistance of those two bodies the Board has carried out the following.

At the September 2012 meeting of the Board the GFT reported on the second year of liming trials on the High Cree. Results were encouraging – egg and alevin survival was significantly better in 50% of the limed areas as compared with the non-limed sites. Additional egg box trials were conducted in early 2013 and results were positive, with egg/alevin survival rates above 90%. In the meantime electro fishing surveys were carried out later in the year. The results of the EF surveys were handed out at the meeting of the Board on the 23rd September 2013. They showed some evidence of wild salmon having spawned in the areas where limestone gravel had been added.

At the September 2012 meeting of the Board the Chairman indicated he would contact SNH with a view to obtaining a licence to cull avian predators. He reported at subsequent meetings on the procedure for obtaining a licence but the matter was not pursued, principally because it seemed The Forestry Commission would not permit any cull on its land.

The stocking policy of the Board was agreed on the 1st November 2012. Thereafter, RCHHT captured 37 hen salmon which yielded some 130,000 fertilised ova for their hatchery. 3,000 ova were used by GFT in their liming trials and the rest were grown on to fed fry stage. In May 2013 some 24,500 fry were stocked out into the burns of the catchment. In September GFT conducted EF surveys of all the stocked sites. With one or two exceptions, good densities of salmon fry and parr were found. Of particular note was the upper Penkiln (above the Pulbae Burn) where fry and parr were present in an area which until recently was devoid of salmon.

RCHHT also removed rhododendrons from some 2.5 kilometres of bank on the lower Penkiln Burn and removed trees from various locations on the River Cree, including the Ghyll Pool, Suspension Bridge Pool, Doctor's Pool and the Learies. RCHHT also

carried out netting for pike in Loch Trool and on the Cree, below Cunningham's Ford. A total of 16 pike were caught and dispatched.

At the meeting of the Board in February 2013 a sub-committee was appointed to prepare a River Management Plan for the catchment, to be presented to the Board at its next meeting. It was thought that this would identify the main tasks required to protect and enhance stocks of migratory fish in the district and to agree how these tasks would be accomplished. The sub-committee had seven meetings and prepared a draft River Management Plan which was presented to the April meeting of the Board. After extensive discussion there was no agreement on the draft plan and it was not adopted.

GFT has undertaken to carry out monitoring of wild juvenile salmon stocks in the Cree catchment over a five year period. A start was made in 2013 by electro fishing sites in the Water of Trool catchment and the results were made available to the Board at its September meeting. The results were mixed; a majority of sites surveyed were devoid of salmon fry, yet there were salmon parr present at a majority of sites, some in excellent densities.

PART TWO

This part of the report summarises what the Board proposes to do in carrying out its statutory functions in the following year.

A sub-committee of the Board has approved the proposed stocking policy for the coming season. A maximum of 180,000 salmon fry could potentially be raised by RCHHT in their hatchery and stocked out into the catchment, but this is obviously dependent on sufficient brood stock being available.

RCHHT is hopeful of being able to start habitat improvement work on the Challoch Burn. This is dependent on a funding application, but that application has passed the second stage in the application process. It also proposes to continue doing similar work to that undertaken in the previous year, including bankside and instream clearance and netting for pike.

GFT will carry out additional liming trials in the High Cree and continue its rolling programme of surveying the catchment for juvenile salmon densities. It also will continue to investigate ways of delivering improvements to the afforested headwaters of the Cree.

The Board wishes to give further consideration to the proposed River Management Plan with a view to formalising procedures for enhancing and protecting salmon and sea trout stocks.

PART THREE – COMPLAINTS

During the year the Board received three complaints. One concerned the actions of a river watcher. It was disposed of by the board at the meeting following the receipt of the complaint by taking a decision on the factual accuracy of the complaint. One concerned the actions of a riparian owner in apparently denying access to their waters by one of the fisheries trusts. It was disposed of by being discussed at the meeting of

the Board where the complaint had been raised and recommendations being made as to future communications. One concerned the actions of one of the fisheries trusts in apparently approving bankside works which interfered with a riparian owner's fishing. It was disposed of at the meeting of the Board where the complaint was raised and considered to be misconceived.

PART FOUR – GOOD GOVERNANCE

The good governance requirements in the 2003 Act only came into force at the end of the year covered by this report. The Board proposes to comply with those requirements in the following year by a careful consideration of them at the next meeting of the Board with a view to ensuring that they are rigorously observed in the future.

PART FIVE – GENERAL

The triennial elections to the Board were held in October 2012. Ten qualified proprietors were elected as members of the Board. Subsequently two angler representatives were co-opted as members. The then Chairman of the Board resigned on the 28th August 2013. The present Chairman was elected by qualified proprietors on the 23rd September 2013.

The officially recorded 2012 rod catch for the Cree and Fleet was disappointing - 536 salmon and grilse as compared with 581 for 2011. Similarly, NSAA reported a total rod catch of 86 salmon and grilse, as compared with a total of 202 for 2011. The figures for 2013 are not to hand at the time of writing but initial reports suggest it has been a poor year.

This is the final report mentioned in section 44(1) of the 2003 Act.

Terence Flanagan

Chairman

Dated.....23rd October 2013